

ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: CRCP International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-IPO-2011-2002585

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.482, Coral Reef Conservation Program

Dates: Pre-applications must be received at coral.grants@noaa.gov or through postal mail postmarked by 5 p.m., U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Monday, November 8, 2010. Final applications by invitation only must be received through www.grants.gov or through postal mail postmarked by 5 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Monday, February 21, 2011. Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (Grant Program), as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, provides matching grants of financial assistance for international coral reef conservation cooperative agreements. The Grant Program solicits proposals that will support the newly published NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program International Strategy 2010-2015 (International Strategy). This constitutes a major strategic shift from support provided in previous years. The International Strategy focuses on supporting existing regional efforts in four priority regions based on their interconnections with U.S. reef ecosystems and existing initiatives and partnerships. Three of these four priority regions will be considered under this Federal Funding Opportunity: the Wider Caribbean, Micronesia, and the Southwest Pacific.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

A. Program Objective

Coral reefs and associated seagrass and mangrove communities are among the most complex and diverse ecosystems on earth. They support important fishing and tourism industries, protect coasts from wave and storm damage, build tropical islands, contain an array of potential pharmaceuticals, and provide local communities with a source of food, materials and traditional activities.

As shallow-water, near shore communities, coral reef ecosystems are ecologically closely linked to adjacent watersheds and are highly vulnerable to human activity. Stresses in the coral reef environment include poor water quality from runoff and inadequate sewage treatment, destructive fishing practices, sedimentation, recreational overuse and misuse, and impacts from climate change.

To address these threats, Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act), which established the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) and provided guidance for allocation of Federal funding toward efforts to conserve coral reef ecosystems in the U.S. and Internationally. As required in the Act, one of the primary functions of the CRCP is to provide matching grants of financial assistance to external partners for coral reef conservation projects consistent with the Act and CRCP priorities. From 2002 to 2008, CRCP efforts were focused on priorities articulated in A National Coral Reef Action Strategy (<http://coris.noaa.gov/activities/actionstrategy>), which outlined the efforts needed to better understand coral reef ecosystems and reduce impacts from 13 key threats that had been identified by NOAA in conjunction with the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.

In response to several factors, which include an external program review in fall 2007, a new program manager, and recent international and threat abatement working group efforts, the CRCP priorities were refined and redirected beginning in 2008. New priorities have been outlined in the CRCP National Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 (http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf), the Jurisdictional Management Priority Setting Documents (<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities/>), and the International Strategy

(http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl_strategy.pdf). These documents are relevant to all CRCP Grant Programs, but some may be more or less relevant to particular applicants. Please refer to Section B. Program Priorities of this document for details on which of these documents is/are most applicable for this funding announcement.

As required under the Act, NOAA published the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (Grant Program) Implementation Guidelines (Guidelines) in Federal Register Vol. 67, No. 76, page 19396, on Friday, April 19, 2002. Based on CRCP efforts to realign the grant programs with the CRCP new programmatic priorities, a revision of the Guidelines was undertaken in fall of 2009 and new draft Guidelines were published on Tuesday, January 19, 2010 in Federal Register Vol. 75, No. 11, page 3092. The new draft Guidelines incorporated relevant comments received by the program and are published concurrently with this notice. The Guidelines can be also found at:
<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/workwithus/funding/grants/welcome.html>.

All pre- and final applications submitted pursuant to this FFO must be consistent with the requirements stated herein and the Guidelines. Funding is subject to the availability of Federal appropriations.

The CRCP intends to provide funding in the following 4 funding categories in FY2011:

1. CRCP State and Territorial Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements
2. CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants
3. CRCP Fishery Management Council Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements; and
4. CRCP International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements.

This FFO is ONLY applicable to International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements. The following information describes the specific requirements and criteria that applicants must adhere to including: program priorities, applicant eligibility, funding availability, pre- and final application content and submission guidelines, pre- and

final application review and selection process, and award administration.

B. Program Priorities

In FY 2011, the CRCP seeks to develop cooperative agreements that will build MPA capacity as outlined in the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program International Strategy 2010-2015 (International Strategy) which can be found at: http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/intl_strategy.pdf. The International Strategy is intended to strengthen and expand the CRCP international coral reef conservation efforts by providing twenty-year strategic goals and five-year objectives that the CRCP will work to address to effectively reduce threats to coral reefs internationally. It focuses on the regions and specific coral reef conservation activities where the CRCP can have the greatest impact while building on NOAA strengths, partnerships, resources and expertise.

Priority Goal One of the CRCP International Strategy is to: work with regional initiatives to build MPA networks and strengthen local management capacity to improve and maintain resilience of coral reef ecosystems and the human communities that depend on them (Priority Goal 1, International Strategy). The intent of this goal is to build well-designed and effectively managed MPAs and MPA networks by strengthening capacity to design and implement MPAs from local to regional levels. The goal also promotes science-based tools and MPA network principles, including connectivity, representativeness, protection of spawning aggregations, biodiversity, livelihood impacts, and resilience to climate change. Although MPAs cannot fully protect corals from stressors that stem from beyond their boundaries, experience has shown that, when combined with other management strategies, such as integrated coastal management and ecosystem-based fisheries management, appropriately placed and well-managed MPAs are effective tools to protect and restore coral reef ecosystems. MPAs also embody vital management strategies to improve and maintain resilience of coral reef ecosystems in the face of a changing climate. MPAs and MPA networks are now being designed, implemented and evaluated in coral reef ecosystems around the world at local, national and regional levels. Supporting these efforts is the top priority of this International Strategy.

Depending on the availability of funds, CRCP will support cooperative agreements that address the following objectives listed under the International Strategy Priority Goal One for MPA capacity-building in each of the following three priority regions: the Wider Caribbean, Micronesia, and independent Samoa and the Southwest Pacific. The objectives

listed under this goal focus on building capacity to support the effective design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of MPAs and MPA networks in coral reef ecosystems in priority international regions. The first two objectives focus on long-term capacity building for MPA practitioners while the following three objectives focus on meeting enforcement, financial, and scientific needs. Most of the objectives are focused on improving management of existing MPAs, which is prioritized over identifying new MPA sites. The Priority Goal One objectives are as follows:

Objective 1: Work with regionally-based social networks of MPA practitioners to undertake capacity assessments that will form the basis of future CRCP support.

Objective 2: Develop and implement comprehensive long-term capacity building programs for existing MPAs, based on capacity assessments to provide training, technical assistance, and follow-up support specifically for:

- a. management planning and effectiveness evaluations;
- b. community engagement program development;
- c. integrated biophysical and socioeconomic monitoring linked to site management goals, including data analysis and interpretation;
- d. use of climate change tools and crisis response planning; and
- e. other topics as needed. (NOTE: Other topics might include those that address impacts to marine protected areas like those related to climate change, land based sources of pollution, or fisheries; for example, strengthening fishery policy frameworks as they relate to improving MPA effectiveness.)

Objective 3: Increase local enforcement capacity to improve compliance with MPA regulations and conservation-oriented customary practices.

Objective 4: Support the development of sustainable finance tools and site implementation of sustainable finance plans to ensure long-term support for conservation efforts.

Objective 5: Use regionally appropriate biophysical and socioeconomic monitoring and evaluation protocols to:

- a. establish baselines and detect changes over time in an adaptive management framework; and
- b. identify priority sites for conservation and assess community support for designation of new MPAs and MPA networks.

Competitive pre- and final applications that address the objectives of the International Strategy Priority Goal One will receive priority for funding. The objectives listed under this goal are not necessarily listed in priority order and may be considered equally relevant. The pre- and final applications must identify the specific objective(s) under Priority Goal One that the proposal will address, and must clearly explain how the proposal will support the selected objective(s). Note that the capacity assessments listed under Objective 1 may already have been completed in some regions. For more information on the status of these capacity assessments, please contact Scot.Frew@noaa.gov.

The pre- and final applications must propose a cooperative agreement with substantial NOAA involvement and describe how this involvement will be achieved. The grantee should expect substantial agency collaboration, participation, or intervention in project performance. Substantial involvement exists when: responsibility for the management, control, direction, or performance of the project is shared by the assisting agency and the grantee; or the assisting agency has the right to intervene (including interruption or modification) in the conduct or performance of project activities.

ALL proposals must fulfill the following requirements:

1. Involvement of two or more countries that are actively engaged in regional marine conservation initiatives, such as but not limited to the Micronesia Challenge and the Caribbean Challenge;

2. EXCEPTION: In the case of independent Samoa, pre- and final applications can propose activities exclusively in independent Samoa ONLY IF the work directly supports the Two Samoas Environmental Collaboration Initiative. NO funds from the CRCP International Coral Reef Cooperative Agreements may be used for work in American Samoa;

3. Enclosure of a letter of support from each country's government agency responsible for planning and/or management of marine protected areas or marine areas;

4. Engagement from each country's key government agencies in the implementation of the cooperative agreement;

Please note that U.S. Federal employees and contractors are not allowed to help in the preparation of applications or write letters of support for any application.

C. Program Authority

Authority for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is provided by Section 6403 (Coral Reef Conservation Program) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6401 et seq).

II. Award Information

A. Funding Availability

NOAA announces the availability of approximately \$1,000,000 in FY 2011 to support International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements under the Grant Program. Distribution of awards may be in the following approximate ranges according to funding availability:

1. Approximately \$400,000 for the first year of one 36-month cooperative agreement in Micronesia.

2. Approximately \$200,000 for one 12-month cooperative agreement in the Wider Caribbean.

3. Approximately \$200,000 for one 12-month cooperative agreement in independent Samoa and Southwest Pacific.

These funds will be used to support financial assistance awards that meet the criteria listed in section I. B. Program Priorities. Applicants that are invited to submit a final application may be requested to revise award objectives, work plans, or budgets prior to submittal of the final application. The amount of funds to be awarded and the final scope of activities will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA Grants Management Division (GMD) and relevant NOAA CRCP staff.

Funding will be subject to the availability of federal appropriations. Applicants should NOT begin a project in expectation of funds under this Grant Program.

B. Project/Award Period

Awards under this Grant Program will have a 12-month period for the Pacific and the Wider Caribbean Cooperative Agreements and a 36-month period for the Micronesia Cooperative Agreement. Pre- and final applications must have an anticipated start date of October 1, 2011.

C. Type of Funding Instrument

Recipients will enter into a Cooperative Agreement with the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program.

III. Eligibility Information

A. Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants are limited to the following categories: institutions of higher education, U.S. and international non-profit organizations, non-US government authorities, and commercial organizations. Individuals and U.S. federal agencies are not eligible.

Applicants should have a working relationship and demonstrated experience working with the local government authorities that manage the marine areas addressed. Applicants for this funding opportunity must have experience conducting regional coordination work in two or more countries (except independent Samoa-see Section I.B) within a priority region (as described below) with other local partners and the local/regional/national government(s) with jurisdiction over the marine sites listed in the pre-and final applications. Priority will be

considered for those competitive pre- and final applications that propose working effectively in more than two countries (except independent Samoa-see Section I.B). Applicants must describe their past experience in the selected sites or countries and whether there are any environmental conservation agreements in place with the local partners and government authorities. Pre- and final applications that propose work across multiple regions (for ex., Micronesia and the Southwest Pacific) are eligible to apply; in these instances, the application must demonstrate that the two or more countries in which work is proposed can be grouped legitimately based on existing regional networks, agreements, and/or existing coral reef conservation activities.

Specific country eligibility is limited to:

1. The Non-US countries and territories of the Wider Caribbean as defined by the Cartagena Convention: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago, Venezuela, France Caribbean Territories, Netherlands Caribbean Territories and United Kingdom Caribbean Territories

2. The Non-US Micronesia region including independent countries under compacts of free association with the United States: the Republic of the Marshall Islands; the Republic of Palau; and the Federated States of Micronesia as well as the independent nations of Kiribati and Nauru.

3. The Southwest Pacific: independent Samoa, Fiji, Vanuatu, Tonga and Tuvalu.

B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

All awards of financial assistance provided by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (Grant Program) under the authority of the Coral Reef Conservation Act (Act) of 2000 are subject to the matching fund requirements described below. As per section 6403(b)(1) of the Act, Federal funds for any coral conservation project funded under this Grant Program may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the award. Therefore, any coral conservation project under this Grant Program requires a 1:1 contribution of non-Federal

matching funds. Matching funds can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor. Federal sources cannot be considered as matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from multiple non-federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match requirement, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any Federal funds received under another award.

Applicants must specify in their proposal the source(s) of match and may be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated match contributions. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer. Applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions for each project selected for funding.

As per section 6403(b)(2) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, the NOAA Administrator may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets the following two requirements:

1. No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement, and,
2. The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

In the case of a waiver request, the applicant must provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver including attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of match. Match waiver requests including the appropriate justification should be submitted as part of the final application package.

Please Note: eligible applicants choosing to apply 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) should note the use of the waiver and the total amount of funds requested to be waived in the matching funds section of their respective pre- and final applications.

C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

This section was intentionally left blank.

IV. Application and Submission Information

A. Address to Request Application Package

For those applicants who are invited to submit a FINAL application, the Federal financial assistance forms are available as part of the electronic application package through http://www.grants.gov/agencies/aapproved_standard_forms.jsp#1. For invited final applicants without internet access, an application package may be requested by contacting Scot Frew, 1315 East West Highway, 5th Floor, N/IP, Silver Spring, MD 20910, Phone: 301-713-3078 extension 220; or e-mail: Scot.Frew@noaa.gov.

B. Content and Form of Application

The application process of this FFO requires both a pre-application and final application. Each pre-application and final application submitted in response to this FFO must be written in English and must include the following information:

1. Coversheet

a. Cooperative Agreement title;

b. Applicant organization name and classification (nonprofit, university, government, etc)

c. Principal investigator and contact responsible for conducting the project;

d. Contact information including address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address;

e. Grant Program category: CRCP International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative

Agreements;

f. The specific objective(s) of the International Strategy Priority Goal One that the proposal addresses;

g. Geographic location of the project (at least two countries; except independent Samoa. See Section I.B) and the sites;

h. Amount of grant funds requested;

i. Amount of matching funds provided; and

j. One paragraph project summary emphasizing the project objective and activities.

2. Proposal Narrative

Each pre- and final application narrative must clearly describe the proposed work in 30 pages or less, excluding letters of support and attachments. Font size should be 12 point with 1 inch margins on all 4 sides. Paper pre- and final applications should not be bound or stapled, but can be bundled, for example, by rubber bands or binder clips. All pre- and final applications, letters of support and attachments must be written in English and letters of support in other languages must be accompanied by English language translations. In addition to the cover sheet, each pre- and final application must include the following elements:

a. The specific International Strategy objective(s) under Priority Goal 1 addressed by the Cooperative Agreement;

b. Justification for proposed activities;

c. Cooperative Agreement Goals and Objectives;

d. Implementation strategy (methods and activities in relation to Cooperative Agreement Goals and Objectives);

e. A task timetable with interim benchmarks linked to clearly defined work projects or objectives;

f. Identification of how the cooperative agreement fits into applicant and government strategy for site management;

g. A paragraph that describes how the cooperative agreement will address relevant management needs. It should include a clear means to incorporate the results into management needs of the agencies with authority over coral reef ecosystems in the project location.

h. A table with a column for cooperative agreement outcomes and another column for their corresponding products;

i. Partner justification and roles: Evidence of support for the project from the local management authority where the work is conducted at specific sites must indicate that the project supports local management objectives. In those cases where training is proposed, indication that participants will apply these techniques at their local sites is requested. Please include evidence of coordination with relevant national and regional project partners, including a list of agencies consulted in developing the proposal and assurances that any necessary permits will be secured prior to the use of U.S. Federal funds.

j. A methodology to evaluate the success of the cooperative agreement activities;

k. Summary description of the qualifications of the individuals and principal investigators who will conduct the cooperative agreement.

3. Budget Narrative

The Budget narrative must include a detailed breakdown and justification of costs for both the Federal and non-Federal shares as they relate to specific aspects of the cooperative agreement using the following categories (from Federal Form 424A): Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment (items of over \$5,000), Supplies (items of under \$5,000), Contractual and Other. The federal forms do NOT have to be included in the pre-application. The forms can be downloaded at: <http://www.grants.gov>. If internet access is not available, please request copies from: Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 1315 East West Highway, 5th Floor, N/IP, Room 5735, Silver Spring, MD 20910, or Scot.Frew@noaa.gov, telephone 301-713-3078 ext. 220; or fax 301-713-4263.

The budget narrative submitted with the application must match the dollar amounts on all required forms. Describe, by category of expenditure, the total cost of the overall work plan for the entire grant period. Categories should correspond to the following Object Class Categories listed in Section B of the SF-424A:

a) PERSONNEL costs, including salary and wages, should be broken out by named PI and number of months requested per year per principal investigator (PI). Support for each PI should be commensurate with their stated involvement each year in the project timeline. Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) should be identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained similar to PI personnel costs above.

b) FRINGE BENEFITS should be identified separately from salary and wages, should be applied consistently, and should apply equally to both Federal and non-Federal (matching) funds.

c) TRAVEL costs should be broken out by number of people traveling, destination and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Briefly describe the travel involved, its purpose, and explain how the proposed travel is necessary for successful completion of the activity or project. If travel details of a particular trip are unknown, you must explain the basis for proposed costs (i.e., historical costs) instead of providing a lump sum estimate. Please also be aware of the provisions of the Fly America Act and use U.S.-flagged vessels for transport, unless a waiver to this provision has been secured.

d) EQUIPMENT is non-expendable, tangible personal property with a unit cost of \$5,000.00 or more and a useful life of more than one year. Items that do not meet the equipment definition may be included under supplies. Each piece of equipment should be described separately and reference the type/model to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals.

e) SUPPLIES should be itemized to the level of detail known or may be based on established historical costs. General use supplies (i.e., computers, printers, etc.) must be used 100% for the proposed project if charged directly to the award.

f) CONTRACTUAL costs should be itemized separately by contract, according to standard budget categories; all types of contractual costs should be included in the Contractual line item on the SF 424A. Indicate the basis for each contract cost estimate in the narrative. Products or services to be obtained via contracts should be described in detail.

g) OTHER costs should be listed by type of material or nature of expense and should be broken down by quantity and cost per unit if applicable. A description of allowable costs can be found in the document listed under Section IV.E (5) about Cost Principles.

h) INDIRECT costs may be requested if the applicant has an established an indirect cost rate with the Federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded will not exceed 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the

Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal share. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government must be included with the final application package. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

Intended sources of matching funds and whether they have been secured must be stated in the pre- and final application. The pre- and final application must also state whether the project has been submitted for funding consideration elsewhere. Applicants whose pre-applications are recommended for funding will be required to submit with the final application, letter(s) of commitment to fund from the organization(s) providing matching funds.

A copy of the applicant federal negotiated indirect cost agreement must be included, if applicable. If the applicant currently has a negotiated indirect cost rate with the Federal Government, up to 25% of the total indirect costs can be included in the budget supported by federal funds. Indirect costs are overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., lights, rent, water, insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project.

C. Submission Dates and Times

Pre-applications must be received at coral.grants@noaa.gov or through postal mail postmarked by 5 p.m., U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Monday, November 8, 2010. Final applications by invitation only must be received through www.grants.gov or through postal mail postmarked by 5 p.m. U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on Monday, February 21, 2011.

Please note: Validation or rejection of your application by Grants.gov may take up to 2 business days after submission. Please consider this process in developing your submission timeline. Paper applicants should allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received on time, taking into account that guaranteed overnight carriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under the International Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements are not subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs.

E. Funding Restrictions

1. Construction projects are not eligible for this Grant Program.

2. U.S. Federal employee travel and salaries are not allowable costs under this program.

3. Large equipment and/or infrastructure acquisitions are not allowable for funding under this Grant Program.

4. Pre-award costs will not be authorized. Only costs within the proposed award period starting on October 1, 2011 will be considered.

5. Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all project expenses. Allowable costs are determined by the cost principles referenced in the Office of Management and Budget Circulars 2 CFR, Part 230 Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations; 2 CFR, Part 220 Cost Principles for Educational Institutions; and 2 CFR, Part 225 Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments. Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, fringe benefits, equipment, supplies, and contracts, as long as these are necessary and reasonable.

6. Permits and Approvals: It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain all necessary national, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize the potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further (U.S.) National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis or whether an environmental

assessment is necessary to conform to the requirements of NEPA. For those applications needing an environmental assessment, applicants will be informed after the peer review stage and will be requested to assist in the preparation of the assessment. Final approval of the award and authorization for expenditure of funds are dependent on the applicant obtaining the necessary permits and approval of the NEPA analysis by NOAA.

Failure to apply for and/or obtain national, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessment) will delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding

F. Other Submission Requirements

1. Pre-application Submission Information

a. Pre-applications may be submitted by surface mail, fax or e-mail and all postmarked by 5 p.m., U.S. Eastern Standard Time, November 8, 2010. Submissions by e-mail are highly preferred to coral.grants@noaa.gov. Acceptable electronic formats for narratives, attachments, and images are limited to Adobe Acrobat (.PDF), or Microsoft Word files. If submitting by surface mail, please include an electronic copy of the pre-application on CD. Federal financial assistance forms are NOT required to be submitted with the pre-application. If surface mail is selected, paper pre-applications must be submitted to: Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 1315 East West Highway, 5th Floor, N/IP, Room 5826, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Fax submittals will also be accepted for pre-applications ONLY (Fax: 301-713-4263).

b. Please note that late pre-applications cannot be considered under any circumstances including email transmission malfunctions. Electronic files of pre-applications must arrive without viruses. If attachments cannot be opened due to a virus or they arrive with a virus, the pre-applications will be disqualified. You may call us at 301-713-3078 x218 before the deadline to ensure that your pre-application arrived.

2. Final Application Submission Information

a. FINAL applications will be accepted ONLY from those applicants who are invited to submit a final application. Applicants may be required to make modifications or revisions to the project and budget narratives and must submit these narratives with a Federal financial assistance award application package (federal forms described below). Only applicants who submitted pre-applications by the deadline will be eligible to be considered for invitations to submit a final application by 5 p.m., U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on February 21, 2011.

b. The applicant may submit the final application (narratives, federal forms, and supporting documentation) in one of two ways: Applications must be submitted through www.grants.gov, unless an applicant does not have internet access. In that case, hard copies with original signatures and scanned copies on a CD must be postmarked by 5 p.m., U.S. Eastern Standard Time, on February 21, 2011 and sent to: Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 1315 East West Highway, 5th Floor, N/IP, Room 5826, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Late final applications by any method cannot be accepted under any circumstances.

V. Application Review Information

A. Evaluation Criteria

Once a pre-application has been received by NOAA, an initial administrative review is conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the application. The CRCP will provide for a merit-based peer review and standardized documentation of that review for proposals that meet the eligibility requirements.

Each pre-application will be reviewed by a minimum of three individuals with knowledge of the subject of the proposal. Each reviewer will submit a separate and individual review and reviewers will not provide a consensus opinion. The identities of the

peer reviewers will be kept anonymous to the degree permitted by law. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and rank proposals using the evaluation criteria provided below. The merit reviewer's ratings are used to produce a rank order of the proposals.

1. Importance and/or relevance and applicability of proposed project to the program goals (25%): This ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and/or relevance to NOAA, Federal (other than NOAA), regional, state, or local activities. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate the need for the proposed coral reef management activity to fill gaps in the country/region.

2. Technical/scientific merit (25%): This assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

3. Overall qualifications of applicants (25%): This ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project. For this competition, the proposal should demonstrate coordination with applicable ongoing local, regional, and international coral reef management activities;

4. Project costs (20%): The project budget is evaluated to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time-frame. For this competition, the budget should reflect the ability of the applicant to complete the work for the funding and timing proposed. 5. Outreach and education (5%): NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy.

5. Outreach and education (5%): NOAA assesses whether this project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy.

NOAA may also request and consider written comments on proposed cooperative agreements from agencies with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted, as described in Section X(1) of the Guidelines. Under this competition, NOAA may request and consider written comments on the proposal from

relevant U.S. government agencies such as the Agency for International Development and Department of the Interior; foreign governments and their coral management agencies; and other international entities as necessary.

B. Review and Selection Process

Upon receipt of a pre-application by NOAA, an initial administrative review will be conducted to determine compliance with requirements and completeness of the pre-application. A merit review will also be conducted to produce a rank order of the proposals.

CRCP will take into consideration comments received from all reviewers. Based on the reviews, CRCP will rank order the pre-applications, and provide preliminary funding recommendations and summary comments on each proposal to those applicants invited to submit a final application. These comments will include input from all reviewers and the CRCP, and are intended to strengthen the application. Applicants must clearly address the reviewers comments in their final application. Upon receipt of the final application, complete with the requisite Federal forms, the CRCP will review the complete package and make final funding recommendations based on the incorporation of, and response to, comments that were returned to the applicant. The CRCP will submit these funding recommendations to the NOAA review panel for final review, pursuant to Section X(4) of the Guidelines to ensure that the Coral Reef Conservation Act requirements for geographic funding distribution and consistency with the provisions of this FFO. The Program Officials and/or Selecting Official reserve the right to reduce funding requested amounts. The Selecting Official makes final recommendations for award to the Grants Officer who is authorized to obligate the funds. If an insufficient number of eligible final applications are received, NOAA may reallocate residual funds from this Grant Program area to a different funding category.

C. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official will select final applications in rank order unless one or more of the selection factors listed below applies.

1. Availability of funding

2. Balance/distribution of funds:

- a. Geographically
- b. By type of institutions
- c. By type of partners
- d. By research areas
- e. By project types

3. Whether this project duplicates other projects, grants or cooperative agreements funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies.

4. Program priorities and policy factors

5. Applicant prior award performance

6. Partnerships and/or participation of targeted groups

7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA to make a National Environmental Policy Act determination and draft necessary documentation before funding recommendations are made to the Grants Officer.

D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

On Friday, January 17, 2011, CRCP will invite selected pre-applicants to submit a final application by Monday, February 21, 2011. This notification may include a request to make modifications or revisions to the project proposal and budget narratives. Subject to the availability of funds, final funding selection will be made and selected recipients notified on or before September 30, 2011. NOAA intends to provide funding to selected applicants no later than October 1, 2011. Cooperative agreements should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until a notice of award document is received from the NOAA Grants Officer at the NOAA Grants Management Division. Publication of this document does not obligate

NOAA to award any specific project or obligate all or any part of the available funds.

VI. Award Administration Information

A. Award Notices

Official notification of funding will be issued electronically by the NOAA Grants on Line system to the authorized representative named on the proposal. Unsuccessful pre- and final applications will be destroyed and not returned to the applicant. It is the goal of the NOAA Program Officer to also provide written notice to each unsuccessful applicant by June 30, 2011.

B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Indirect Costs

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established indirect cost rate with the Federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded will not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs that the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated Federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal share. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal Government must be included with the pre-and final application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

2. Multi-year Funding:

If an application is selected for multi-year funding, NOAA has no obligation to provide any additional prospective funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Any subsequent proposal to continue work on an existing project must be submitted to the competitive process for consideration and will not receive preferential treatment. Renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the

total discretion of NOAA.

3. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):

NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), for applicant projects or proposals that are seeking NOAA federal funding opportunities. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following NOAA NEPA website: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>, including our NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA, http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap_216/naos_216_6.html, and the Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations, http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm. Consequently, as part of an applicant's package, and under their description of their program activities, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitat to be affected, possible construction activities, and any environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems).

Applicants proposing coral reef conservation activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be informed after the peer review stage and may be requested to assist in the preparation of an environmental assessment prior to an award being made, or review a copy of an environmental assessment that covers proposed activities if one exists. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for not selecting an application. In some cases if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment. The PEA and FONSI can be found at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/ead/ecosysdocs/CoralPEAFinal.pdf>.

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for the denial of an application.

4. Digital Geospatial data

Recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced under grants or cooperative agreements. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with the Federal Geographic Data Committee Content Standard for digital geospatial data. The Executive Order can be found at: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/pdf/12906.pdf>

5. Financial Assistance Award Package

The Grant Program uses only the existing NOAA Federal financial assistance awards package requirements per 15 CFR parts 14 and 24.

6. Paperwork Reduction Act

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection-of-information, subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq., unless that collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number. Forms SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, and SF-LLL and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046 and 0605-0001, respectively.

This notice also contains a collection-of-information requirement subject the

Paperwork Reduction Act and which has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0448. The public reporting burden is estimated to average one hour per response for comments on a proposed project from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted and one hour per response for a request for a waiver of matching funds. This estimate includes the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of these data collections, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, N/OCRM, National Ocean Service, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

7. Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (Vol. 73, No. 28, page 7696) are applicable to this solicitation.

8. Award Standard Terms and Conditions

Successful applicants that accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. This document can be found at:
<http://oam.ocs.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/DOC%20STCsMAR08Rev.pdf>.

C. Reporting

All performance and financial reports shall be submitted through the recipient's NOAA Grants Online account in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress on each award is communicated to NOAA in the form of performance progress reports, which are outlined in 15 CFR Part 14: Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-Profit Organizations or 15 CFR Part 24: Grants and Cooperative Agreements With State and Local Governments. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-

month period from the start date of the award. A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration along with copies of all products that are developed under the award. Copies of all materials (such as but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, workshop proceedings etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 90 days of the end of the award.

Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

VII. Agency Contacts

Technical point of contact for International Coral Reef Conservation is Scot Frew, NOAA/NOS International Program Office, 301-713- 3078, extension 220, e-mail at scot.frew@noaa.gov or address at: NOAA/NOS/IPO, 1315 East West Highway, Room 5826, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

VIII. Other Information

There is no other information for this announcement.